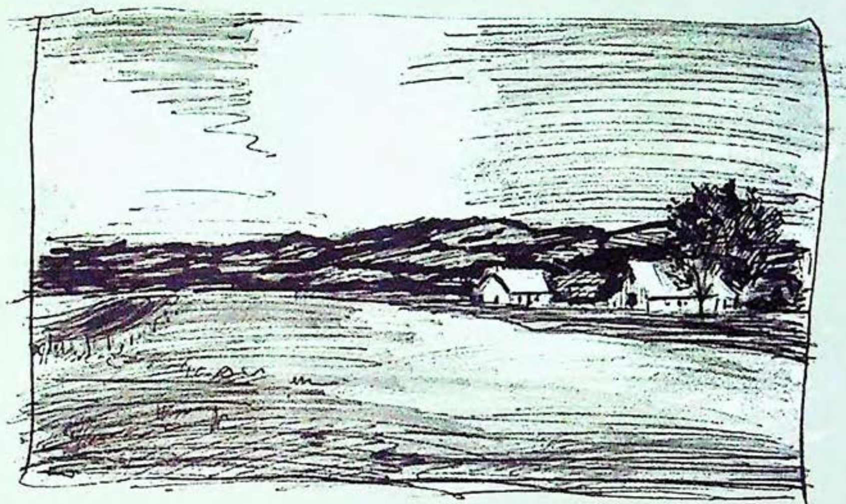
In Their Own Voice

Stories, Memories and Impressions of Tribals in Orissa





Edited by
Anil Pradhan

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RUPANTAR

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Foreword

The autobiographical accounts, folktales, songs, ethnographies and details of festivals brought together under the title In Their Own Voice by Anil Pradhan offer a veritable cultural feast. However, it is not that the rather strange collection provides useful anthropological information. That the volume does, but more importantly, it presents an 'insider view' of the indigenous communities of Odisha. Perhaps, the most alluring feature of the anthology is the perspective it maintains.

The anthology is put together as a pedagogic tool, a text that can be taught but does at the same time inspire the student and the teacher alike. There have been other attempts to put together the folklore of the indigenous for using as educational materials; but this anthology has a distinctive flavour of its own as it not only uses the material from the indigenous lore, but very cautiously presents an entirely indigenous perspective too. What is more, the perspective is not either romanticized or unduly idealized. Even some 'negative' experiences of the teachers find place in the autobiographical statements by them. Thus the anthology provides a fully realistic picture of the life of Adivasis in Odisha, particularly the educational life.

The accounts presented here have managed to embed several levels of time within their ambit. There are first the trans-generational folktales and songs. Then there are accounts of the school experience, or rather the experience of the absence of formal school, from the preceding generation. And, finally, there are the classroom experiences with contemporary relevance. One feels that this cohesive

realism of the anthology is a result of the long experience of working closely in the field that Shiksha-sandhan has gathered over the last two decades. As the editor's 'Introduction' makes it clear, Shiksha-sandhan has been a pioneer in 'all tribal' educational experimentation in Odisha. That rich experience is brought to bear on the selection and the structuring of the anthology, which otherwise may appear somewhat ungainly.

It is necessary to bear in mind while approaching the anthology that its primary form is that of "materials developed through interactive workshops between the teachers and the taught." The experiment and the production of the anthology both deserve commendations. The collaboration of the Bhubaneshwar based translation organization Rupantar in making the anthology available in English deserves praise as this material will surely inspire teachers engaged in education of the indigenous communities in India towards creating comparable materials informed with a realistic perspective and sensitivity to making education a completely inclusive experience.

In the national discourse on education in India, the massive illiteracy in the Adivasi areas is seen as some kind of 'incurable' problem. Unfortunately, some educational theorists have even attempted the futile exercise of mapping the IQ of several tribes, of course, with disastrous and misleading findings. The country has not so far resolved as to what would be the apt education for the Adivasi children, what kind of pedagogic strategies need to be employed to bring the Adivasi children close to the modern scientific and technological knowledge.

The question of modern scientific and technological education raises issues relating the quality of education in the Adivasi villages. For, how long can the children there be kept collecting cow-dung whereas the children in the cities have started learning computers? Can laboratories be established for training high-school children in chemistry and physics, if they do not know how to write and read? The answer to these questions is that the country needs to think

more seriously about appropriate technologies than it has done so far. By this, the Adivasi teachers' community does not mean that only the industries based on cow-dung be developed in the villages. Here it is implied that the technologies used for educational purposes be thought in terms of their aptness.

Those of us who have worked with Adivasi children have seen that the memory span and memorization capacity of children in the Adivasi villages are quite impressive. They are able to store an entire lesson delivered through the oral means in their memory for a long time. Given this special advantage, will the radio technology be not more appropriate for taking schooling to the un-reached? In the villages, where teachers do not or cannot reach, can simple transistor sets not function towards achieving what must be achieved at any cost if we wish the Indian democracy to really spread evenly across all peripheries of society? This would be less expensive and yet effective, provided of course, a substantial amount of planning of the task and understanding the pedagogic complexities in using another medium are attempted with scientific seriousness.

This will mean that a fresh unitization of texts and lessons needs to be visualized. A group such as the Shiksha-sandhan collective needs to be first allowed to experiment and then to empower others from the community to undertake the task. An imaginative use of communication technology can help the human resource in the villages to participate in the knowledge processes, gain from them as well as contribute to them.

There is a very strange attitude towards the Adivasi knowledge stock prevalent in our country. It is believed that the knowledge about medicinal herbs and seeds of diverse plant species that Adivasis have, be documented, patented if possible, and the amounts realized out of such patenting be used for Adivasi development, and that done, the question of knowledge in relation to Adivasis ends. But, it is necessary to ask if they cannot be made to participate in the contemporary knowledge processes, be seen as 'knowledge communities' of their

own unique kind. If the state cannot provide schools in the Adivasi villages, if persons who understand Adivasi culture cannot be identified and sent to whatever schools exist there, if no relevance exists between what is taught and the life as it is lived in those villages, it is but natural that the children's creativity will not blossom. Moreover, if the strengths in the traditional culture of Adiviasis are not understood and used in organizing their education, and designing the pedagogic methods, those assets will obviously be lost altogether.

Hence, it is necessary to think of experimenting with the oral stock of knowledge as a means of teaching; and in order not to relegate the great gift of memory that Adivasi children have merely to the status of an aid to folklore, we need to bring in appropriate communication technologies for enhancing the talent. We can then reach thousands of Adivasi villages and give the children their democratic right to receive the benefits of Indian democracy. It is for these important reasons that the excellent anthology of materials put together by Anil Pràdhan needs be welcomed by everybody concerned with education for India's Adivasis.

Ganesh Devy
Baroda, 7 December 2010

Editor's Note

Sikshasandhan has been innovating in the field of education since 1995 with the conviction that education is a powerful tool for the empowerment of the marginalized. During its early phase it worked as a resource centre which provided support services to voluntary organisations and government departments on training, local-specific curriculum and teaching-learning materials development. During the process it found out that there was shortage of supplementary reading materials for children in tribal communities reflecting their world view, even though they constitute 23% of the total population of the state. As a result, tribal children feel inferior to children in the so-called mainstream communities and lack confidence. Sikshasandhan organized a series of workshops for teachers working in tribal areas, children and parents in tribal communities to hear from them about their experiences in the field of education. We found that due to the centralization of educational administration, training, preparation of course curriculum and text-books without addressing issues such as language and culture, children of tribal communities are neglected. Sikshasandhan developed primers in tribal languages before government of Odisha developed primers in tribal languages. Sikshasandhan organized a workshop for writers from tribal communities. Discussions held at the workshop were recorded.

In 1999, Sikshasandhan set up alternative education centres for children of tribal communities through its partner organizations with the support of Welthungerhilfe (formerly known as German Agro Action). The following are the main features of the programme:

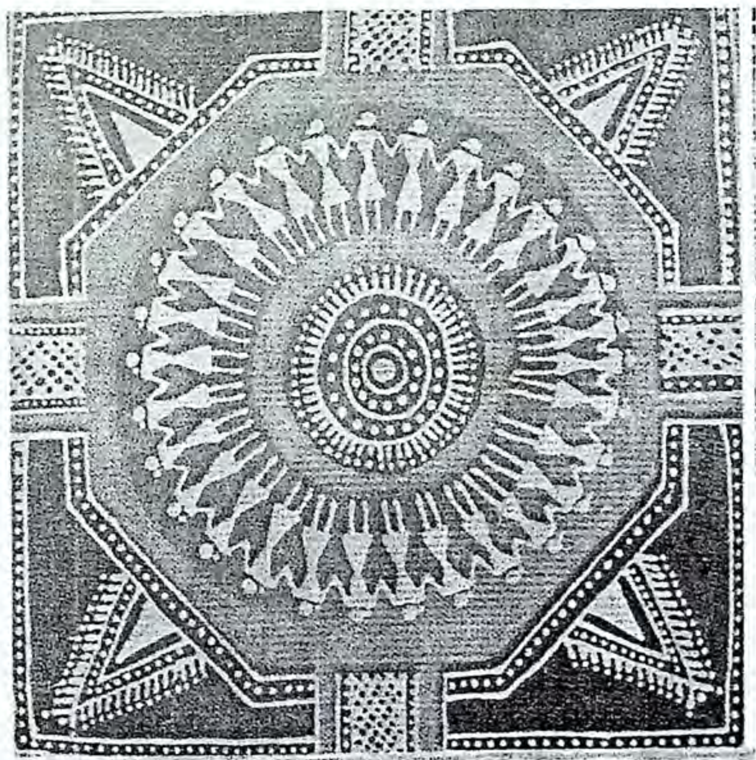
1. Selection of teachers from the tribal community itself to bridge the language and culture gap between teacher and students.
2. Preparation of local-specific curriculum for children with the help of parents, children and teachers
3. Timing of the schools had been fixed as per the convenient of the communities
4. Community participation in management of the centres, selection of teachers, and classroom process.
5. Emphasis had been placed on creative development of children.

As the teachers were selected from the tribal communities, emphasis was laid on their capacity building. They were encouraged to collect teaching materials such as sticks, leaves, stones etc from the surroundings and stories, songs, riddles, games from the communities. They also prepared charts of words collected from children. In the initial stages, they were extremely reluctant to write about their personal experiences. We encouraged them to write about their childhood. A few of them wrote about their childhood days and their writings were serialized in *Sikha* (a bi-monthly magazine) published by Sikshasandhan. Encouraged by this, other teachers working in AECs wrote about their childhood and their experiences of teaching tribal children in uncongenial circumstances. Sikshasandhan also encouraged them to write the histories of the villages where they taught with the help of old men and women. They collected stories, riddles, songs, games and made use of these at the education centres as reading and teaching materials. These helped them build their confidence.

This volume features stories and songs and village histories collected by our teachers and accounts of their personal experiences. Generally tribals are written about and figure as objects of study. Here one finds them speaking about their own lives and the ways in which they see the world.

I owe special thanks to Professor G.N.Devy, who, in spite of his busy schedule, went through the pieces included in the volume and contributed an insightful and thought-provoking foreword. I would like to thank our teachers who were our partners in this beautiful initiative. Without them this volume could never have been compiled. I thank members of the Sikshasandhan team who have been very supportive throughout. I express my sincere gratitude to Jatindra K. Nayak for going through the manuscript and making useful suggestions. Last but not the least, I express my thanks to Rupantar for brining out this book.

Anil Pradhan



Memories of Teachers

My Childhood

Tilsu Disari

I am Tilsu Disari. My father's name is Ghana Disari and my mother's, Bangari Disari. We belong to village Chakerjhola, Dasmantapur in Koraput district. We are three brothers in all, and we did not have a sister. I hail from a poor tribal family, but our parents were concerned about our well-being.

When I was about five or six—my father said something, which is still fresh in my memory. One day, Father told us that we should go to a school nearby.

At that time, my elder brother was in his first year in an Ashram school. Another brother, younger than me, was in his teens. We said to our father that he should let our elder brother go to school, and we would follow him in due course.

We were ten or twelve boys of the same age in our village. My father would tell us about his childhood days. 'There were no schools, no opportunity for education in our time. When I was about nine or ten, my father used to send me to take our cattle to the forest. Once Sukudeva, a learned man, from a nearby village, came to visit our village. He excelled in dancing and composed beautiful lyrics. He would organise *daskathia*. We would be spell-bound listening to his melodious songs. We asked him about the secret of his success.

The learned man replied, 'You can also do what I am doing by pursuing your studies.' He encouraged me to learn the alphabet. We did not have slates on which to write on in those days. We wrote what he said on the sand. Now-a-days government provides a lot of

facilities. One could become a capable man by pursuing one's studies.' These words of encouragement from my father proved a blessing for me.

We tribals celebrate numerous festivals. Chaiti Parva, an early spring festival, is one of them. Villagers, on the day of this festival, would kill a wild boar in the nearby forest. We boys were keen to see how it was killed and dressed. We vied with each other to reach the place early to watch the hunt. In fact, I, along with two friends of mine, once reached the spot first. Later on, when others reached the place, a quarrel over who reached the place first broke out. The quarrel turned bitter, and was settled only after the intervention from village elders. On that day, the villagers realised how unruly their boys had become. In order to discipline their children, they decided to engage a teacher, who was asked to make the boys learn, liberally using the rod.

My father invited the teacher who was earlier imparting lessons in song and drama. At home, I asked father if he would really bring a teacher for us? Father said, 'yes' and asked me to wait till it was morning.

After daybreak, we accompanied our grandfather to the jungle, where we tended goats and returned home in the evening.

Back home, the teacher who had been brought by Father was waiting for us. My father asked me to appear before the teacher and pay my respects to him. Shivering with fear I met the teacher. Another fifteen boys soon joined me.

Villagers decided to provide meals to the teacher as per a fixed routine. If he had his lunch at one house, he had dinner at another. Towards the end of the year, during the harvest time, the teacher received a specific quantity of grains and ten rupees from each student.

Since that day my educational prospects grew brighter. Father would often give me advice concealing a threat, saying 'Be attentive. The teacher is paid for giving you lessons. If you don't pay attention to what he teaches you, you will never be spared.'

Sometimes, he would encourage me saying that if I did well at my studies, I would get better opportunities and I would escape this life of tending goats and cows on the hill in the blazing sun and torrential rain. Slates for writing the alphabet soon became available. Our teacher provided each of us with a slate by collecting money from our parents. Study hours were fixed in the morning, evening and also during night. All boys brought their own supply of kerosene and lit their own lamps.

One day, in the month of July, the guardians of boys who were given lessons met the teachers of the ashram school and discussed the prospects of our receiving education there. That was the day of the weekly village market. A teacher called Iswara Panigrahi came to our village on that day and got us enrolled in the ashram school.

At this time, I was away tending cattle on the hill. My father came up to the hill and asked me if I would like to go to the ashram school like my friends.

I asked him, 'Who has come to take the boys to school?' Father told me that a teacher had come to the village, and he had announced a variety of incentives which included provision of dress, free food, plates and accommodation. No sooner did I hear of such facilities than I accepted the offer. But father warned me against dropping out of school like my brother. I hurried down to the village leaving the cattle on the hill and handing my father the stick used to tend them.

At that time, the Oriya primer *Madhu Barnabodha* was very popular. That book contains all the letters of the alphabet including compound letters. Once we started reading this primer,. it became our constant companion. I liked the curriculum,. because I realised that if I did well at my studies, I will never be asked to mind goats and cows.

I studied for one year under our village teacher. After that, I realised that I was really able to read messages scribbled on hoardings, on walls or at any other place regarding elections, announcements

and slogans. This prompted me to join an ashram school situated three kilometres away. My parents were reluctant to send me to that school as there was nobody there to fall back upon if I fell ill or faced any hardship. Earlier my elder brother who was studying in that school had dropped out of it.

The following incident took place in March, 1991. My father advised me that I should not expect my mother to do everything for me. I should take bath in the stream and put on my clothes on my own and go to school.

As I was used to wear a dhoti when I went to take lessons from the teacher in the village, I went to the school wearing a dhoti. I had come to realise that life in village was really not interesting. At the Ashram school, my education started in real earnest. As I was already conversant with simple arithmetic, addition, multiplication and division, I was admitted straight away into standard two. There was no need of a birth certificate for my admission.

My Life as a Student

I had no idea about the passage of years and did not know how to read a calendar when I enrolled myself as a student at the ashram school. I used to fill my handwriting book with writing. But when the old year ended, I still continued to write 1991. One day, a friend of mine made me aware that the New Year 1992 had arrived. This gave me the idea that years change, old years give way to new ones.

Nityananda Bidhar was the headmaster of the ashram school. He liked me because I was doing well at my studies. Once, when I was in class four, students in a higher class were given a task on LCD and GCD in the mathematics class but nobody among them could give the correct answer. The mathematics teacher made us do this task. The junior students were usually entrusted with difficult tasks. These were specially assigned to meritorious boys. The task was assigned to me. I solved the problems. Our headmaster, to humiliate the seniors, asked me to tweak their ears and slap them. I

refused to do so for I feared that, if I did so, I would cease to receive all help and co-operation from them. But when I was caned thrice for disobeying the command, I did the bidding of the headmaster against my will.

The next year, I passed my fifth standard, and was enrolled at the Middle English School at Panchada. At that time, I was deeply interested in my studies and I had a strong desire to finish the two years' course within one year.

I passed my sixth standard examination securing a high percentage of marks. Both my Headmaster and Hindi teacher, at the very beginning of the academic session, mentioned the percentage of marks I had secured. I had secured four hundred eighty-five marks out of five hundred fifty. We had to sit for the Board Examination in class seven. The centre of examination was eight kilometres away from our school. I appeared for the examination and got the second position in the entire Lakhmipur block.

When I was enrolled in class eight, my teachers selected me to appear at the NRTS scholarship examination. The examination centre was located in Koraput; I sat for the examination and once again secured the second rank. For the next two years, I received a scholarship of five hundred rupees per month.

Back at home, my father was suffering from tuberculosis. I knew nothing about the disease and, as a result, I could not take proper care of father. The disease was aggravated day by day and my father succumbed to the disease during my examination, which was held during the month of April. It was a Thursday and we had history and mathematics examinations in the schedule. The next day the papers we had to sit for were English and science. The news of my father's demise reached me in the school.

My younger brother, who was also studying there, broke down. I consoled and persuaded him to stay at the school and appear for the examination, telling him that we would not be promoted to next standard if we did not appear at the examination. After three days, our examinations were over and we visited the ghat to pay respects

to Father, where his body had been consigned to the flames. From that day, my interest in studies lessened.

After the demise of my father, we got worried about our mother, who had incurred heavy debts for father's treatment. All our cattle— goats and two cows— were sold off to meet the medical expenses. Even the scholarship money I received from the school was spent on his treatment. We tried to lighten her burden by repay the debts and at the same time, tried to meet our school expenses. One day, on the eve of the puja holidays, she told us that, though we were very good at our studies, she was not in a position to support us nor was she able to arrange money from any source. I now apprehended sudden disruption of our studies.

One day, I decided to visit my maternal uncle's house. To reach his place, one had to travel twenty-two kilometres by bus. I rode a bus to reach my maternal uncle's house. I had five rupees in all and I spent two rupees on the bus journey.

My uncle sensed that something was wrong and asked me what the matter was. He also asked after our mother— his elder sister. I requested him to give me a loan of fifty rupees, which I needed for meeting my school expenses. I promised to return the amount during the summer holidays. Uncle readily gave me thirty rupees and also offered me a hen, which would provide us with the expenses required for our studies. That hen really helped me a lot in meeting my educational expenses up to standard ten. During the harvesting holidays, when I came back home, I saw that the hen had laid four eggs. I told my mother about aunt's proposal of raising a poultry. My mother now allowed us to continue our studies but warned us, 'You must do very well at studies, which would bring us glory.'

Due to financial constraints, I secured the second position in class ten. Around Saraswati Puja, we had to fill up forms for appearing for the matriculation examination. But, as ill luck would have it, an epidemic broke out, killing all our chickens. Arranging our examination fees amounting to one hundred and thirty one rupees suddenly proved difficult. I urged my mother to borrow this amount. I promised to her

that we would return it during summer, doing wage labour. My aunt gave me thirty rupees. She knew about the financial hardship my mother was undergoing on account of us. Besides, there were also daily expenses to be met at home. Where would Mother obtain a loan from? There seemed to be no way out. Mother grew very depressed.

Mother borrowed money from my father's elder brother and, while handing over the amount to me, she told me, 'If you do not do well in the examination, the debt would never be paid back.'

When my younger brother asked for twenty rupees as donation for Saraswati puja celebration, my mother broke down. She remembered her deceased husband and said, 'Had he been around, I would not have worried about the expenses.' My younger brother had twenty rupees. We did not have the money to buy two coconuts to offer at the feet of Goddess Saraswati. We were very upset. If did not give the donation, we might be criticised, and if we went there without the coconuts, we would be made fun of. So we decided to sell our geometry box for ten rupees though the box actually cost eighteen.

My matriculation board examination started in the month of March. I got a second class securing three hundred seventy-three marks. If the situation at home had been favourable, I would have surely got a first division. I received my stipend, one thousand rupees, which I handed over to my mother. We did not have any other dress except our school uniform. My mother did not have the extra money to pay for our dress. Financial problems goaded me; as a result, I was not able to do well at college.

Now I am working as a Guru-bhai (teacher). It is a joy for me to teach the boys of my village. This gives me an opportunity to serve my village.

Teacher, Alternative Education Centre,
Mankadmundi, Dasmantapur

* * *

My Life as a Student and a Teacher

Jayasmi Murmu

I was born on 7th November, 1983. I was initiated to studies when I was three and half years old. I started scribbling on a slate by imitating my elder brother, who was then going to school. Afterwards, I accompanied my brother to the school. But, after a while, my elder brother was reluctant to give me company any more. There was no school nearby. One had to walk five kilometres to reach the nearest school. At that time, wheat gruel was prepared in the school kitchen and was served to the students. I would implore my father to take me to school. My father, after a day's hard work, started teaching me the alphabet at night. Alas, my father was not well equipped to teach me beyond the alphabet. After teaching me the alphabet my father became clueless. Then he sent me to the Anganwadi centre situated in my village. The Anganwadi centre of my village gave us lessons in singing, dance etc. in an informal manner. I felt once again restless. I asked my father whether my study was all over? While others could read books, primers and write on notebooks, could I not learn these, too? I asked my father.

My father once again grew anxious. As an immediate solution, to make me happy, he would ask Mother to take me to school before going to his work. As I was very scared of my elder brother, I could not dare go with him to the school.

I learned the multiplication table up to nine from my father. I also learnt to read words with vowels. My father took me to school daily in the evening. Sometimes, my father brought me back from school

at night. On some days my father could not escort me home, I slept at our lady teacher's house, whom we addressed as 'Apa'. I was promoted from standard one to standard two in the night school. I learnt to read books and count numbers. I was able to write the names of all our family members. I also practised hand-writing.

I was very good at studies and topped in the class. I volunteered to take part in all activities at the school. I was also an obedient pupil. Once our teacher asked me to make a drawing. I drew a flower and showed it to her. She would encourage me a lot, so I started drawing along with my studies. On another occasion, Apa asked the students to erect a fence around our school. I accompanied senior students to the nearby forest to collect material for this. As I was not used to cutting bushes, Apa dissuaded me from doing this work. But I persisted and injured myself. While cutting the bushes, I injured the thumb of my left leg. I held my injured thumb out of pain without informing anyone. Blood oozed from the wound profusely and soaked the sand. The senior students came to know about my injury and helped me. They were, in fact, anxious about my wound. They tied my leg with a rope in order to stop the flow of blood. Apa's daughter practically carried me home. The scar of the wound still remains on my leg and reminds me of the incident.

My Father's Advice

One day, Father was ploughing the fields which lay near our house. At that time, my youngest brother was a child. Father seemed to conduct a test of my elder brother and myself. We were supposed to weed out grass from the field. Father told us that whoever finished this job first would be rewarded with a pair of new dress. Besides, he would be considered the most intelligent one if not as lazy.

My brother left quickly after clearing a narrow patch of ploughed land soon after Father's departure, whereas I continued weeding the field. When Father returned he found that my brother had already gone away. At that time, my brother was a student of class three in

Patrapada Ashram School. Father asked me whether I would like to study in the Champajhar School staying in the hostel. I immediately said 'yes'. I sat for the admission test and was selected for an interview. Four girls were selected from our village to study there and were provided hostel accommodation.

Till then I was not used to take care of myself. I did not know how to comb my hair or to wash my clothes. I did not comb my hair for five days in a week. Our teacher scolded me for this act of negligence. Her name was Ratana. She belonged to our village. She would regularly comb my hair. Afterwards, I slowly learned to do my own work.

I was the youngest among the boarders in the hostel. I used to sweep the floors till I felt tried. If we didn't do our work properly, seniors would scold us, they even beat us sometimes.

When I came home from hostel, I complained about this to my father. He counselled me, saying— 'Go on discharging your duties. Though, I'm your father, I can't shape your future. You have to shape your own destiny. The petty punishments meted out to you at your school would be of no importance in the long run.'

In the hostel, twenty pice were collected every Sunday from all the boarders to purchase incense sticks. Once my father forgot to give me money while visiting me at the hostel. I did not have a single paisa with me. On that day, Jagannath Majhi was in charge of collecting the money. After the prayer, he demanded the fee from me. As I expressed my inability, he beat me black and blue. I can't forget this incident till today. All this happened for a meagre sum of twenty-five pice!

Dukhiram Murmu and Vidyadhar Bainsia were our teachers. When I had any difficulties with my studies, I immediately took the help of Bainsia Sir. Murmu sir did not like this. He was so enraged that he wanted to fail me in the examination. But I passed the examination securing the sixth position among forty-nine examinees. This caused a row between him and Bainsia sir.

In order to take revenge on him, Murmu sir instigated the boarders to desert the hostel. At that time, I had two pairs of dresses. I was wearing one pair and the other pair was taken away by the homebound students. I was at a loss. If my parents knew about this incident, they would definitely scold me. I ran after the students to collect my dress. Somehow I managed to cross the rivulet where the water was waist-deep. But another rivulet was in spate making it impossible for me to reach the village on the other side. My friends had saris with them. A sari spread across the stream could help one cross the river. The river could easily drown a man. We could not swim against the current. We were seven in all. Witnessing our plight, people informed our relatives. They brought three empty vessels and we crossed the river by sitting on them. We had not had any food till three o clock in the afternoon till we had crossed the rivulet. All this was done to recover the spare pair of my dress. This is an unforgettable episode of my life. This incident took place due to the hypocrisy and machinations of Murmu sir.

After some days, Murmu sir got transferred and another teacher, Sethi sir, joined in his place. At that time, I frequently fell ill. Sethi sir was very fond of me. He was a hard task master. He did not spare the rod while he taught in our school for a brief period of eight months. Sethi sir also received his transfer order. Before he left, he advised me to maintain good health and also advised me to pursue my studies sincerely so that I would achieve success in life. Then Jayanti Nayak joined our school. I was then a student of class five.

Bainsia sir and his wife were extremely fond of me. Sometimes, on occasions, they invited me to their house. Our new teacher, Jayanti didi also lavished her affection on me. After class five test examination was over, she presented me a pair of new dress. Both my teachers used to advise me to continue my studies in the face of difficulties. They would also tell me to become a nurse after my studies.

After I completed class five, I studied at Jamukhanjari M.E. School as a day scholar. I usually helped my mother in doing domestic chores before and after the school hours. I never depended upon my parents for buying my dresses. During holidays, I collected leaves from the jungle and sold them. When I passed class seven, I wanted to continue my study at the high school. Due to financial problems, my father was reluctant at first. His argument was that more expenditure would be incurred if I continued my studies. When I told him that I would arrange the expenses required for my own studies, Father gave his permission. Finally, I was admitted into R. N. Girls' high school. I got books from my elder brother. For one year, I did not need any new dress. In the high school, all my teachers helped me in pursuing my studies. I passed class eight and due to a difference of four or five marks, I could not stand first in our class.

As ill luck would have it, my health started deteriorating during the summer vacation. Upon medical examination, I was found to be suffering from brain fever. As a result, I could not continue my studies at class ten. I lost my stamina. I developed problems of eyesight and hearing. My parents made great efforts to get me cured. The matriculation examination approached. Our Sanskrit teacher and the school peon came to our house to persuade me to appear at the board examination. As I had not prepared for my studies, I refused to sit for the examination. But my teachers in the school would not listen to me. They offered the required examination fees, and my examination form was dully filled in. After this, I felt really serious about the examination. The day of the examination drew near. I started preparing myself. Due to weakness I could not work hard. I could not work out sums. I was not confident at all. The fever relapsed out of nervousness. I appeared at the examination, feeling feverish and weak. All my teachers encouraged me. I feared that I would score miserably in mathematics and English and may fail in the examination. I had a lingering apprehension that people might criticise me if I failed in the examination. I wished I had not appeared for the

examination. Really, everything depended upon providence. My Sanskrit teacher told me, 'If you passed the examination, I would come and give you the good news.'

One day, I got to know that the results had been out; though two days had passed in the meantime, none of my teachers came to our house. I presumed that I had failed in the examination. Next day, in the afternoon, our Sanskrit teacher arrived at our house. When he asked me for sweets, I felt happy. But, the result was a bit disappointing. The pupil who always stood first in our class had passed in the second division, whereas all others including me got through with a third division. Our Sanskrit teacher comforted me, saying— 'You have done well considering how you appeared in the examination despite illness and difficulties.' He encouraged me to pursue my studies diligently in future.

My U.P. School teachers often reminded me that I should train as a nurse. For this one had to pass +2 science. The financial condition of my parents, my poor results and also my illness came in the way of pursuing a career in science. I took admission in +2 arts; my brother helped me to procure dresses and books. He also paid my hostel fees. The deteriorating financial condition of my house disturbed me often. At that time, my younger sister was suffering from illness. I would visit home twice in a week. We spent around five thousand rupees in the hospital at Karanjia and Thakurmunda, but she did not recover. Doctors attending her advised us to take her to Cuttack Medical College.

We needed money to save the ailing child. But we did not any money with us. We borrowed two hundred rupees from Gagan Palei, who worked at Agragamee. We mortgaged our paddy field. My brother took my sister to Cuttack. Some days back my family had to bear expenses for my treatment. Now it faced the same situation again. I felt deeply anguished. All the money went down the drains; my sister breathed her last in the hospital.

At the beginning of my studies, I had dreamt that, with the good wishes of my teachers and villagers, I would get a very good education, which would make me stand on my own. I had a fond wish that I would pursue a successful career in education which would make me an able man to serve society. But stinging financial problems and my deteriorating health combined to bring me unhappiness.

In my village, I spent my time teaching children, starting from class one to class five. The children were also very much attentive. I had always nourished the hope that my village and villages in its neighbourhood should develop, no matter, how little. Sometimes, when my father did not approve of my work, I would explain to him that my education was worth it if even ten students could get benefited by it. This would silence Father.

Later, Agragamee, an NGO, recruited me to run a school. I told my family members of this. At that time the villagers and my family members did not hold Agragamee in high regard. Without paying heed to anybody, I joined the institution. I had to fulfil my dream— to serve my people. I did not know what the future held for me.

Having faced all sorts of problems, I appeared at the +2 examination, still teaching children at Agragamee. I passed this examination. I read for the B.A. degree. I made up my mind to become a graduate.

I happened to be a tribal girl. I faced all sorts of discouragements when I decided to study further. When they realised that their protests would be of no avail, they changed their stand. They extended all sorts of help for my studies; they also encouraged me— what I learnt from my experience was that in tribal areas women's education was neglected largely because of the parents of the girl children.

So long as the parents were not aware about the values of education or did not want their daughters and sons to avail themselves of equal opportunities—the scenario would not any change. I would go from one house to another and ask the parents as to why they felt

reluctant to send their daughters to school. I also tried to explain to them the benefits of education.

They would give stock answers.. 'What benefits would come their way through education?', they would ask me. 'A girl upon marriage would soon go to her in- law's house. She would spend the rest of her life there. If she was given an education, her in-laws may criticise us if she failed to discharge her domestic duties there.'

If girl children received non-formal education, they would learn many a thing. If they realised the value of education, they would not stay back at home.

I worked hard to bring girl children to school. When I was in Champasahi, for this mission, I had to face opposition. But ignoring all criticism, I would persuade girls to have an education. I made them understand by holding out the prospect of good careers and high positions.

My campaign was successful. Girls, who earlier did not come to school, those very girls who covered their faces in the presence of their elder brothers out of shyness, came to school and are now studying in standard three. Girls of school going age in Champasahi village are now enrolled as students of the school. I met the girls who did not come to school, and asked them the reasons for not enrolling themselves in the school. I got different responses. I also asked their guardians. They also reacted differently. The guardians of some students though were very eager to provide education to their children, felt somewhat diffident. In some cases, a child eager to go to school was not at all enthused by his guardians.

Girls became irregular in attending school, for they had to do various domestic chores. If a girl came over to school without heeding her parent's instructions, often they lost interest in their education. This developed distaste for education in child's mind. If they remained absent for a day from the school, they were afraid of coming to school the next day. The pupil feared that the teacher would scold

her or mete out punishment to her. This fear haunted her. Then she would drop out of school.

I could relate to their predicament and I used to advise them to discharge their domestic chores by letting them stay at home for a couple of days. They could then come to the school without any fear of being told off by the teacher. Often I would tell them—'Alright, now you have your parents, but they would not live forever; sooner or later, you have to shoulder your own responsibilities. Be careful, there would be nobody to give you advice on how to lead your life. Again, you would be too old for learning. Whatever problems may come your way, you are required to educate yourself. Nobody at your in-law's house would trouble you. Nobody would cheat you or exploit you in life. We can carve out a place for ourselves in society through our knowledge.

Now, I continue my work in Gaja Amba village. Girl children, between eight to twelve years, still do not come to school. I failed in mobilising them to come to school. Yet, I never stopped persuading them. I met them individually and asked them about their problems. Whether they had an interest in education or not, if they had the desire to learn what came their way— if they did not have enthusiasm for education—what was exactly the real reasons? The case of a girl child of eleven years old, Kumari Betra Banara of Gaja Amba village, summed up the problem precisely— What problems may on earth deter a child from going to school? It is only domestic chores at home. She became motherless when she was a child. Some days back she went to school and learnt the alphabet there. But then her father married again and her stepmother did not allow her to go to school. In fact, she tried hard to go to school by finishing household chores but in vain. She says— 'I wanted to study further but my father and step-mother did not want it.' Her parents were illiterate. How could they understand her urge for education?

Likewise, I met a girl aged seven or eight. Her mother was ailing. There was nobody in the house to look after a child and to do

the household chores. That was why she could not go to school and refused to go to school saying that education had no use. I recounted her the story of Kumari and her interest in going to school. She said that whenever she raised the question of going to school at home, she was punished. This created in her a distaste for education.

I mulled over the problem. How to bring such girls to school? I asked help from the members of the education committee. Now twelve girls, who earlier did not attend school, come to school occasionally.

As I hail from a tribal area, I have experienced the ground realities myself. I shared the trials and tribulations of tribal girls. Whether they studied up to standard one, they were more intelligent than the boys. If parents provided them the right opportunities, these girls, in no time, would rise higher in the ladder of education. I can say with confidence that, whatever awareness the tribal girls may now have, in days to come it shall spread far and wide. It would help bring tribal girls from darkness to light.

Teaching at Alternative Education Centre, Champasahi

I joined formally as a teacher at Champasahi Alternative Education Centre on May 10, 2000, and started my duty on the following day, May 11. I shuttled between Champasahi and Kalamagadia, where I was staying.

At first, eleven to twelve students used to come to the school. I met the villagers individually on a regular basis and persuaded school going children to come to school. I convened the village council meeting and discussed the issues there. Slowly but steadily, the enrolment in the school increased. But, still some children in the village did not come to school. Those who attended the school were not at all conscious about cleanliness. I had to adopt some strategies. When the children gathered in the school, I took them to the nearest pond and bathed them. I gave combs and mirrors to those children who came to school with dishevelled hair. I also motivated the parents

for keeping their child neat and clean. After some days, children came to school, neat and clean. I visited students who happened to suffer from illness, and advised them to go to hospital instead of performing some rituals. As children came under regular health check-up every month at the school, they got cured of their ailments by taking medicines. Now, if ever they suffer from any disease, they go straight to the hospital.

While travelling from Kalamgadia to Champasahi, I faced umpteen problems. The path was covered with thick forests. I also had to bear with innuendoes and eve-teasing on my path.

One day, I visited an ailing child in the village. Just after my arrival, two boys — they must be eighteen or nineteen years — came to the house and asked me for pieces of chalks. As I did not have any, I told them that I did not have any. Then they I asked me how I could make a child learn without a piece of chalk. I told them that without even a piece of chalk, it was possible to teach. Unfortunately, aunty had gone to fetch firewood at that time. The two boys started criticising me. They tried to scare me by telling me about tigers and bears prowling the forest path, by which I used to come to the village. I wanted to leave the place instantly– I thought that, if I went back, I might encounter problems on the way. But I faced them with confidence. At that time, aunty arrived and I told her everything. Aunty became angry and chastised them. Next day, I did not go to the school. I wrote about the previous day's development to my supervisor and stopped going to the school. The villagers of Champasahi went to bring me back to their village and the two boys begged for my forgiveness.

On another day, a boy from Bindhani family sent me an offensive letter through his sister. His sister attended the school regularly. I handed the letter to my co-ordinator after reading it. I had let my co-ordinator know about my problems. After this incident the sender of the letter was shown the road. As problems multiplied I decided to

stay in Champasahi. As there were no spare rooms available for my lodging, I decided to stay with a villager. I lived as one of his family members. But other problems arose though the pressing one was solved. Somehow I managed, facing the problems spiritedly. But as soon as I stepped inside the school, I would forget all my problems.

I worked hard to bring children to school in Champasahi village. Fifty-seven children were enrolled at the school. Out of them forty to fifty students regularly came to the school. As there was no school building, I taught the students on a veranda. This arrangement also brought inconveniences and students had to face a lot of problems. During winter and summer, it functioned as an open school under the shade of trees. Sometimes the house owner, on whose veranda the school ran, treated us with hostility.

Village council meetings were often convened by me. Enrolment in the school and other related issues regarding teaching were discussed here. In the meeting the need for a roof over the open school was discussed and a resolution was passed to build one. The day for the construction of school was finalised, yet the roof did not get built.

This uncertainty lingered for two years. The thought kept worrying me. Earlier, we used to celebrate Saraswati Puja in a corner of the village. I thought of a plan and decided to persuade village people on the occasion of puja.

'We would not go all the way to Kalamgadia to celebrate puja. This year, we would hold it in our village.' As was resolved in the village council meeting, the villagers agreed to celebrate the puja at the school. They also felt the need for a house where the school could run.

A house could not be constructed immediately. I proposed to celebrate the puja under a banyan tree. It was decided that older students would pay ten rupees, whereas the juniors would pay seven rupees only. During the puja, all the guardians with their wards were

asked to present there. The amount collected from students was insufficient for the puja. I contributed some money. The children came over to the puja to have prasad.

At night, three villagers and around twelve students and myself spent the night, guarding the deity. The singing of devotional songs continued until midnight. The celebration of the puja seemed certainly to have influenced them. New students got themselves enrolled in the school, school-going children came to school but not a guardian did. I thought of other plans to attract the remaining ones. In the mean time, five months had passed – the school building was yet to get built. A sense of uncertainty oppressed me. Finally, I started constructing a house by spending from my own pocket. When construction was over the school ran in the house. I had offered my personal income voluntarily, because I wanted this village to develop.

New Year arrived. I planned for a picnic with the children. Accordingly, preparations were made and everyone was required to give two hundred and fifty grams of rice and one rupee. A sum of fifty-seven rupees was collected from the children. I offered money towards the cost of vegetables. I invited the villagers to the picnic. Three women and seven men came to attend it. Villagers helped us in the cooking. I cooked a curry of cabbage, potatoes, brinjals, cauliflowers, gram and tomatoes. Dal was also prepared and salad was dressed.

Children really enjoyed the occasion. They went round the place singing and playing pranks. They made their own leaf plates and cups and used these for taking their meals. All the children took bath in the river that flowed nearby, and after this they were all served food. They were made to sit in a row. After the meal, the left-over food was distributed among them, which they took home. In the evening, we all left for the village from the school. My dream of enrolling all the children of the village was fulfilled.

As I succeeded in my venture, the officials wanted this to be replicated in other villages. They wanted me to take the responsibility

of getting children enrolled in schools in other villages. But the villagers were in no mood to relieve me from their school. I also did developmental work in the village. I organised gatherings of women; got the men to discuss matters regarding the development of the village. But it was of no avail. Then I thought to myself that if it was possible in this village, I should try the same elsewhere.

Women's organizations, which had been instituted in 1999, but had become defunct, were reconstituted. Thursdays and Sundays were fixed to convene meetings. On Thursdays, a meeting was held at Pandu Sahi in Rani Pokharia. This was attended by seven women. After my school was over at twelve o'clock, I took my meal and walked down to the village to take part in the meeting. We discussed various developmental issues. Women offered to do voluntary work. They also contributed money to the community fund. They deposited six thousand rupees in the bank. The thirty-seven women were divided into two groups for forming self-help groups. They were made to learn how to put their signatures by writing their names on slates. I made every conceivable effort to help them.

On Sundays, the women of Dilisore village held meetings. They raised a fund. They deposited one thousand and seven hundred rupees in the bank. All these additional duties never came in the way of doing my work at the school.

But it took a heavy toll on my health. Sometimes, good work done in neighbouring villages were not taken favourably of my host village though I did a lot of work for them such as educating their children and preparing them for receiving higher education.

At that time, my father's health deteriorated. As I used to support my family, I had no option, but to visit home almost daily to look after my ailing father. I took the responsibility of my father's medical treatment. During this period, a training programme was organised in Bhubaneswar. I did not want to go there, but my ailing father persuaded me to attend the programme saying, 'Your presence

at home would be of no help if God wishes to take my life. You should go and attend the training programme.' Before I left for Bhubaneswar, I gave some money to my mother in case any emergency came up.

I discussed the problems I faced with presidents of the watershed missions of Champasahi and Kalamagadia. They promised that they would look into the matter and make sure such untoward incidents would not happen. I also requested them to permit me to leave their village. But they did not agree to my proposal. They agreed to send their children to the school. Though children came regularly to school they would not obey me. Villagers still threw barbs at me, which became unbearable to me. They started back-biting. Yet I continued my work in spite of all this hostility.

One day, the situation took on a new turn. When I asked the children to give the walls of the school a coat of cow dung, the children, in their turn, asked me to do the same. I felt deeply hurt and decided to quit the school. I discussed the developments taking pace at the school with my father. He thought I should leave the school. I spoke to staff members of the centre and finally left the school.

I decided never to work in Sarat area in my life. I wanted to work in another village, which was situated fifteen kilometres away from my village and not connected by good roads. I discussed my plan with my father; he readily agreed to my proposal. During this period, Kamal Bhai visited our house when I was away. I did not know exactly why he visited us. I once again visited the centre at Sarat. They did not allow me to leave them. Once again, I was given my earlier assignment , yet, a sense of dissatisfaction kept nagging me.

Teacher, Alternative Education Centre, Champasahi

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The Achievement of my Education Centre

Bhubaneswar Majhi

Years ago, our village, Surupada, had no school. There was thus no way the children of the village, could receive education. The nearest school was at a distance of two kilometres from our hamlet. It was impossible for little children to cover such a long distance and attend school. When the children grew up, they were engaged in various kinds of work. As a result, a good number of children in our village grew up without receiving any education.

In our hamlet, an alternative education centre was set up in 2000, to be precise, on 1st December 2000. An education committee consisting of seven members was formed to manage the school. The school functioned in a house, two hours in the morning and three hours in the evening. The school had forty-two students, twenty boys and twenty-two girls. Villagers were on the whole contented and regularly sent their children to school. Kids used to come to school in the morning; whereas older persons, who tended their cattle during the day, only found the time to attend the school once in a month. The education committee organizes meetings where the benefits of education are discussed.

Villagers have come to realise the value of education and they send their children to government schools after they complete their schooling at alternative education centres. There were a few drop-outs. Often pupils come back to attend school after discontinuing their studies for some time.

Children in class one are made to learn the alphabet and to recite songs and narrate stories. Class two students learn three-digit figures and work out simple sums. Class three students can read books, work out addition and subtraction of three digits. They also learn the English alphabet. . Once in a month, the students of the school visit various watersheds, which are being constructed in other villages.

The villagers are now aware of various health hazards and afflictions. There is provision of health check-up in our centre. Doctors come to see the students and prescribe medicines. The teacher at the centre keeps medicine in his custody. Students go to him and collect medicines prescribed by the doctor.

Villagers are very pleased that their children can read and write. They often provide them with rations for organising picnics. In our hamlet, women formed Self Help Groups. Twenty women enrolled themselves in the organisation. The money they have deposited amounts to seventeen thousand and five hundred rupees.

I can confidently say that the alternative education centre has left a deep impact on the villagers. In future, more and more people would enrich their lives through education in Surupada.

Teacher, Alternative Education Centre, Surupada, Nuapada

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Bringing Children to School

Tilsu Disari

Education provides the path of enlightenment to man. It is education that helps man express the virtues latent in man. The role of education and its ennobling impact is not restricted to the school premises. Different forms of pedagogy and systems of education are prevalent as part of nation-building activities. Alternative education centres stand out as different institutions. Alternative education is a kind of non-formal education where ideas gathered in course of execution of planned development are applied creatively. Often pedagogy involves the teaching of stated subjects. Theses subjects, as such, are dry and lifeless. It is through alternative education that the uninspiring subjects become interesting.

The world around us provides broad subjects to a learner, where he himself touches them, feels them and examines them all by himself. This process enhances his cognitive ability. It increases his inquisitiveness. Such an approach is very different from formal learning processes and book-based pedagogy.

At alternative education centres, tribal boys and girls, deprived and socially excluded, get opportunities for a new kind of learning. During my five-year stint here, I have been able to provide learning opportunities to ninety to ninety-five percent of all the children of this village. Those children who were shy, homebound, fearful of teachers have now become independent and fearless.

But, what about the schools run by the Government? The deprived classes are abandoned to their fate in this system. In tribal

areas, schools remain closed for days on end. These schools in no way help their students. The alternative teaching centers are opened for tribal students in remote villages of Orissa, where government-run institutions are inadequate to cater to the demands of the students. The alternative education centers are meant to enlighten them. Tribal parents, due to economic compulsion, engage their children in various domestic chores, such as taking care of their younger siblings, cooking, and to tend cattle. These activities form their daily routine.

The alternative education center is specially meant for them. The timings of the centre are fixed taking into account the routine of the villagers. The school is run both in morning and evening. Older boys and girls who go for work during the day, come in the evening to study. There is an alternative education center run by Sikshasandhan at Mankadamundi village in the Dasamantpur block of Koraput district. The center has thirty-seven students in all, who have been enrolled to study in the school, the twenty-nine boys and eight girls. The girl students, who are now students of ashram schools and government run primary schools, were earlier students of this alternative education centre. Our centre, besides textbooks, uses non-formal media of story-telling, song recitation, sports and games. The study of environment is also incorporated into the teaching curriculum. The pedagogy adopted in the centre is different from the one that is practiced in government-run schools. It is structured in such a way that, tribal students feel very comfortable with it and they can utilise their knowledge in their day to day life. Education is linked to their life. In the alternative education center, a monthly meeting between students and teachers is held, where matters such as cleaning the village, personal cleanliness, absenteeism of any particular students, preventive measures for diseases are discussed. The discussion also includes the domestic chores assigned to them by their parents, and the way how these works can be accomplished. In each month, a cabinet is formed from among the students, and minister for chief

education, health, agriculture, finance, environment and sports, besides chief minister.

Involving Children in Running the Centre

Chief Minister

The Chief Minister supervises the works of other ministers. In case, any of the ministers remains absent or goes to his relative's house, the chief minister assumes the charge of the minister. In case any minister fails to discharge his duties, he informs the matter to the Gurubhai. This becomes the agenda for discussion among the students. It has been decided that if any of the minister wishes to remain absent, he is required to inform the Chief Minister and hand over the charges to somebody else.

Education Minister

The Education Minister is in charge of the keys of the school. He comes usually in the morning and evening and rings the school bell, announcing the start of the centre. When the bell is rung, the minister in charge of cleaning arrive in the school along with other students. The Chief Minister and the Education Minister join the prayer with other students and after prayer, they make the students to sit in their respective classes. In case of low attendance of students, the education minister discusses the matter with the health minister. After discussion, the health minister visits the students at their houses, and if there was any instance of illness, he reports to the education minister. The education minister also supervises whether the black board is clean, duster and chalk for the teacher.

Health Minister

The Health Minister supervises the health of the students as well as the health of the villagers. The basic health care including administering of drugs to different diseases are informed. In case of a student falls sick, the Gurubhai and Health Minister are informed duly. The health minister also supervises the personal cleanliness of students, whether they brushed their teeth properly or combed their hair.

Minister in Charge of Light Arrangement

In the evening shift, light is the most essential to run the school. The minister in charge of light arrangements supervises the stock of kerosene oil, and conditions of the lanterns. He checks the length of the wicks, and any cracks if any on the glass. He sends lanterns to each room of the center. He looks after the maintenance of lanterns..

Minister in Charge of Cleanliness

He supervises cleanliness starting from broomsticks and maintenance. He supervises the cleanliness of classrooms.

Minister of Agriculture

The minister of agriculture teaches in the midst of nursery daily in the afternoon. His teachings contained the rudiments of agricultural work. He teaches how to use organic manure, plant seedlings in the field and how to water them. He also sells the produce of the nursery and keeps the accounts. He also collects vegetable for the monthly feast.

Finance Minister

The finance minister collects two rupees from the guardians of students at the end of every month. He purchases kerosene for the evening shifts with the money.

Minister for Environment

The Minister Environment consults with the Chief Minister and convenes a meeting of students at the end of each month. They decide a new place of interest for outing. He also decides whether vegetables should be collected from the agricultural minister or from the students. The students are asked to bring vegetables of their choice from their garden. The minister also organises students, which includes singers, story-tellers, and also drummers. The story-teller is supposed to teach moral lessons to students. He selects a visiting spot, chosen by the students and takes them there. Some students assist in cooking, others collect firewood; some dress the vegetables

while others go out to fetch water. After cooking is over, they roam all over the place and when they all come back from sightseeing – they sit in groups, either singing songs or listening to stories. These shout slogans such as victory to the village deity, victory to the nearby mountain and to nation and to the states. After that the environment minister starts a question-answer sessions. The questions are asked about the visitor's experience on the place. I jot down in a writing pad all responses to questions put to the students. The boy or the girl who is found well informed are praised by all. After the feast, students are engaged in dance and song and returned home happily. The sports minister learns from me the tricks of different games and divide the students in to groups. All the boys obey his command. Each Saturday, competitions are held in the field and students are also exercised. . The sports minister becomes chief of the sports and game events. During various games or while taking exercise, if somebody gets illness, the sport minister administers first aid.

Pedagogy

Math Teaching

Tribal students do not easily understand mathematics. They are familiar with various methods of counting from their parents and relatives. They also have knowledge of measuring such as ada, mana, measurements by hand, and puti. They are also aware of the number of eyes, legs, and wings birds have. They learn mathematics by taking their past experience into consideration. Now-a-days, they like mathematics as a subject. Addition, subtraction, and multiplication are taught to students through practical examples.

Language Teaching

Language teaching is based on songs, story-telling and ideas received from observation. The students are trained to give a patient hearing and then express their response. After that the lesson starts, our school has a garden, where sand is piled. On this bed, learners practise newly acquired alphabet. The sand pit is also used for sports

and games. The sand bed is surrounded by a garden, where flower plants and medicinal plants grow. Little boys and girls draw different shapes resembling animals, birds, flowers etc. They learn their lessons informally from their elders. Children also learn about their environment.

Science Teaching

Science teaching is based upon observation as well as from their daily work through planting of trees, collection of seeds, making of dolls and also pursuing various vocational practices.

The alternative education centre organises monthly health check up of students. In case of any ailing child, his mother comes over to the center to inform us about the child.

Besides this, we also spread awareness about the villagers' rights to water, jungle and land of the tribal people through plays and theatres. I believe earnestly that this education centre has left a deep impact on the minds of the people. The students of the centre are found to participate in the affairs of the village.

Teacher, Alternative Education Centre, Dasmantapur

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Tribal Stories

The Magic Lamp

One day, Hari was passing through a forest. While he was still walking, he happened to come across a sage meditating under a sprawling banyan tree. He felt inclined to serve the sage. The sage was very pleased by Hari's sincere devotion, and offered him a magic lamp. He said to him, 'Whenever you light this lamp, a djin would appear instantly and help fulfill your wishes.' Hari came back home with the lamp and used the magic power to get impossible things done with ease. As he was a bachelor, he wanted to get married. In his community, brides were brought forcibly for wedding. The bride Hari chose for himself was not really attracted towards him. She hid herself and Hari's attempts to find her were futile.

At last, Hari used the power of the magic lamp and djin appeared from nowhere and asked what he was expected to do. The djin brought the bride before Hari with in no time. They got married, but the bride still did not take to Hari. His conjugal life was far from happy; they spent their life indifferent to each other's sentiments.

One day, the bride talked sweetly with Hari and wanted to know about the djin. Hari was excited and told her the secret of the lamp. One day, when Hari was away from home, his wife acted swiftly. She threw the lamp into a well and escaped to her father's house.

When Hari came back, everything was lost for him.

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Donga Mundi

There is a small village near Tikiri in Kashipur Block. Boat-shaped stones are found here. The boat-shaped stones are known as Donga Mundi. The village was called Donga Mundi. Every year, a big festival is organised here— people worship deities and offer up prayers to them. The following legend is known about Donga Mundi.

Long back, the place was not as populated as it is now. The greater the number of people, the greater is the number of violations of social norms. God planned to punish the culprits. But, there was a chance that punishing them may also lead to the destruction of others who were innocent.. So he searched for virtuous people and found that except for a brother and a sister, there was no one who had any virtue.

The Almighty offered the brother and sister a boat. Then it rained ceaselessly and the hills and mountains got submerged. The sinners were at last killed; the world was purged of sins.

The brother and sister had escaped from the deluge thanks to the boat given to them by the Almighty. After some days, the rain stopped and waters receded laying bare the old landscape.

The Almighty was once again in a thoughtful mood. This time, he wondered how he would populate the place. The sibling relationship of brother and sister stood on the way. The Almighty descended on the earth and changed the appearance of the girl through magic and the brother did not recognise her. This enabled them to become husband and wife. Tribal people believe that they are the descendants of this couple.

Tripati Jhodia, Kashipur, Rayagada

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Ketung

Ketung is the first man of the world. The Soura tribe has descended from him. The origin of Ketung is described in Soura myth.

A brother and sister duo, while tending cows, heard a strange prophecy from the cow. The holy cow advised them to make a boat instantly to save them from the destruction coming in the form of a deluge. After some days, the prophecy came true and they saved themselves staying in the boat. When the deluge subsided, they stopped at Sri Kheta. From that day, the Soura worshipped cows. The first man Ketung was born from this couple.

Ketung served gods in their battle with the demons. Souras are descendants of the Sun God and they belong to the Sun dynasty.

Nilambar Gamanga, Koraput

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The Story of Kumudakote Village

There is a village near Kumudakote. It has around sixty houses. At the opposite end of the village there was a thatched hut, owned by Dakara. Dakara family consisted of his wife Dakari and their only son; he was called Sukuru as he was born on a Friday. The boy was very lazy. Both Dakara and Dakari did not tell him anything because Sukuru was their only child. One day Dakara said to his wife Dakari that Sukuru had now become old enough to start a family. Dakari told Dakara to visit Kokata near Santaspuri village to look for a bride. Dakara agreed to her proposal and visited the bride's house accompanied by a few fellow villagers.

The date of the wedding was fixed. Dakara sold the only piece of land to meet the marriage expenses. The news of the wedding spread to their relatives; people from the bride's side gathered at the bridal feast. The wedding ceremony was over and a year passed.

Sukuru became a father, but he was yet to become worldly-wise and look after his family properly. He took to drinking. On his return home after consuming alcohol, he started beating his wife, Budu. If they had gruel in the morning, there was nothing to eat in the evening. At last, Budu ran away to her parental house after quarrelling with Sukuru.

Budu's father was an educated man. He hit upon a plan to help his daughter. He told Budu to organise village women to fight against addiction to liquor. Budu organised them. Women announced that, if anyone distilled liquor in the village, they would stop cooking at home. Menfolk were taken aback by the the stand taken by women. The instances of distillation of liquor grew infrequent. When liquor was needed on festive occasions, villagers distilled a small quantity of it.

Uday Ch. Mishra, Jeypore, Koraput

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The Witch Doctor Goes Wrong

People of Unary tribes have been living in a remote hamlet since long. A jungle stood nearby the village. The tribals believed in spirits and in deities. They did not have any knowledge about medicines.

There was a couple in the village—Sambaria and his wife. They had a two-year old daughter. One day their daughter went down with a fever. She stopped taking food. Sambaria thought that this happened due to the anger of a deity. He immediately rushed to the backyard of his house and collected there pieces of straw. He rubbed the straws on his daughter's body and took it to the witch doctor of the village. The witch doctor sat down immediately on the ground and started uttering mantras. Thereafter, he measured the pieces of straw by his fingers. He made certain calculations and came to the conclusion that a spirit residing in the mango tree at the outskirts of the village had possessed the patient. To ward off the evil spirit, a black hen and some white flowers were required, said the witch doctor. He also said that, after performing due ritual, he would make the spirit go back to his original dwelling place. When Sambaria collected the articles needed for the worship, the witch doctor performed the worship and went away. Sambaria felt relieved at last.

But, the next day, Sambaria found that his daughter still had fever. He thought that the evil spirit was yet to leave his daughter's body. Mangala, a village lad, advised him to visit the nearby hospital. At last, he consulted a doctor, who diagnosed the malady as malaria and admitted his little daughter in the hospital. After two days, she was completely cured of the fever..

Sambaria felt very happy. He brought back his daughter home. On the way, he made up his mind that he would never again believe in witch doctors.

Kamalakant Nayak, Keonjhar

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The Marriage of Makaru

There was a tiny village surrounded by mountains and forests. A rivulet flowed past the village. Makaru belonged to this nondescript village. Makaru was about fifteen. Gurubaru, Makaru's father was a poor man. He earned his livelihood by tending cattle in the village. Makaru, too, helped his father in tending cattle.

Makaru learnt bamboo crafts and tricks of trade from his father. By using thin, polished bamboo strips, he could make baskets, winnowing fans etc. He bought dresses for himself with the money from selling these. When his father Gurubaru died, he was, left an orphan.

Later, Gauntia, a rich man of the village, engaged the gifted boy at his place and also arranged his marriage Gauntia negotiated with Disaru of nearby village for his daughter. Disaru had no option but to accept the proposal of Gauntia. When Makaru came to know about it, he felt immensely happy. But he had no money to pay the bride price. Days passed. Disaru proposed Makaru to work for five years in lieu of bride price. He immediately agreed to the Disaru's proposal. At last, an auspicious date was fixed for the wedding. . Gauntia met the expenditure of the bridal feast and other related expenses.

After two years,, Makaru was blessed with a baby son. Disaru was ecstatic and offered three acres of farm land to his son-in-law. On this land, Makaru built his own thatched house and lived happily thereafter.

Roopnarayan Majhi

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Patra Budha and Dangasil

Dangasila is widely known in Kashipur. The presiding deity of the village is Patro-budha. Each year a big festival is organised here; people from nearby villages gathered there to offer coconuts, fowls and beasts to the presiding deity, Patro-budha.

There is a legend on the wedding of Patro-budha. Long ago,, Patro-budha lived in the village. Then few people inhabited the village. Patro-budha was at that time in the prime of life. Like all young men, he wanted to have a life partner. He looked for a suitable girl all over and found her in Kalahandi. He brought his bride to river Indravati, which was then in spate. As luck would have it, he found a boat in the river. Patro-budha crossed the river in dark. Fearing that someone might notice them, he turned themselves invisible. But the boat still lay there and turned into stone. His village was named after the stone resembling the boat.

Tripati Jhodia, Kashipur

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Garbu or Beheading

There was a place three kilometers away from Jhiti Miri village. During the winter, people go to their fields for harvest. They take their children along with them.

One day children were playing mock festivals. They imitated the beheading of beasts before the deity. They played the roles of Jani, Bejuni and village headman. Someone acted as the sacrificial goat.

The children cleaned a space under a mango tree and performed the ritual imitating their elders. When the ritual was over, the mock village head man imitated the actual village elder. He used a mango leaf as knife for beheading. But at that moment the act of imitation turned real and the head of the boy acting as the sacrificial goat was chopped off. There was silence followed by panic-stricken children ran to their parents working in the fields.

In those days the jani and Bejuni possessed spiritual power. The famous Bejuni-ganga, Chundi immediately collected some medicinal herbs from the forest and joined the head to the trunk applying it.. The medicine worked like magic; the two parts joined and the dead came alive. People, who had assembled there, became happy. In the midst of their happiness, they heard a voice from the sky warned them not to indulge in such mock rituals. The divine messenger said that henceforth this place would be known as Garbu, which meant 'beheading'.

Ghasi Sabar

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The Tortoise and the Old Woman

A serpentine rivulet flowed by a hamlet. Near the rivulet, lay a green-pea field, which belonged to Dhoban. The old man would lie there. The old woman grew peas. She also guarded the field against thieves and pea-eating birds and animals

A tortoise came every day to the rivulet and scurried back home after drinking water. One day, the tortoise said to himself, 'Really, the green peas are growing luxuriantly. Let me make friends with the old woman.' So thinking, he started talking to the woman. The tortoise narrated interesting stories and impressed the woman. Whenever he found a chance, he stealthily ate green peas to his heart's content. This went on for some days. One day the old woman found that the green peas in the field were fast depleting. She was absolutely sure that the cunning tortoise was eating them.

The old woman thought up a plan. She made an image resembling her out of coal tar and kept it there.

After some time, the tortoise came to the image resembling the old woman and started telling stories, sweet and funny. But, he observed that the old woman did not respond to the stories. She only smiled, In fact, the image was made with a smiling face.

The tortoise got very angry. Out of anger, he kicked the sticky coat of the image and his leg got stuck in it. The tortoise thought that this was the old woman's trick. He tried to pull his leg out, but instead he got completely stuck in it.

The old woman arrived in the meantime and saw the tortoise entrapped completely. She killed the tortoise and made a curry out of its meat. The meat was tasty. Since that time, tribal people eat tortoise meat.

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A Folk Tale

Long ago, a cowherd lived in a village. His name was Chhati. He had lost his parents since early childhood. He tended the cattle of a rich man of the village and ate his meals at the rich man's house. One day, while the cattle grazed in the nearby field, he thought about his life as a servant and his bleak future. He dreamt of his marriage, a home and children. In fact, out of excitement, he started searching for a bride while he went going on errands. He accidentally met a woman, who had been separated recently from her husband. They came to know each other. They decided to get married soon.

After their marriage, they depended upon the rich man for food. But the food they were given was not enough for the two of them. The woman proposed to start a small business, which would help them save against a rainy day. She borrowed money from the rich man and started doing a business. In course of time, she amassed a fortune. Her husband Chhati persuaded her to give him some money with which he could train as a magician. But, actually, he spent the money on drinking alcohol. When all the money was spent at the the liquor shop, he wanted to deceive his unsuspecting wife by showing her some magic tricks. One day, he proposed to bring fish from the river which would be, invisible to his wife. He purchased some fish from the market and kept it hidden in his home. At the time of angling for fish he made some strange sounds calling the fishes. His wife sat watching him angling without having a shade of doubt about the tricks her husband was performing.

Chhati declared that the fishing was over and the fishes were actually conveyed to their house with the help of magic. At home, his wife found the fishes and ate those with pleasure.

One day, Chhati had been to the rich man's house. A messenger from the king came to their village in search of a magician, who could trace the stolen gold and silver of the king. The messenger arrived at Chhati's house and asked his wife if there was any magician in the village. Chhati's wife told him about Chhati. She persuaded her husband to go to the king's palace. She thought this would bring them a lot of wealth. Chhati knew that, if he failed, only the Almighty could save him from death. But he had no option but to go to the King's court.

On the way, he felt very nervous, which made him make water ten times. He said to himself that he should be prepared to be thrashed by a tamarind switch a thousand times. Luckily for him, this proved a blessing for him. The thieves had hidden themselves in a place nearby, and thought that Chhati had found them out. Out of panic, they disclosed everything to him. Chhati felt suddenly confident and pointed out the place where the thieves had hoarded the property. The king gave him a handsome reward. Thereafter Chhati and his wife lived happily.

Damburudhar Jani, Padepadar, Kalahandi

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Marang Buri

According to Santali beliefs, Marang Buri is the creator and also the presiding deity of the world. All the heavenly bodies, the flora and fauna of the world are created as per the wishes of the Marang Buri. Marang Buri, in Santali, has different meanings. This story of creation is woven around one of its meanings.

The meaning of Marang is 'supreme', and buri means 'soul'— 'supreme soul'. It is formless. He embodied the void and darkness. Due to a great collision lightning emanated from a fire ball and went round in the void. Heavenly bodies were formed from this collision. In course of time, jahar became the place for sowing seeds.

Before this cosmic event took place, no one knew what the form of Marang Buri was. Creation and destruction are subject to the dictates of Marang Buru. Santals worship this all-powerful entity.

Surai Hembram, Sarat

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The Call of Trees

The village of Khairput is situated in Gumma area of Gajapati District. About forty tribal families live in the village. They earn their livelihood cutting trees and selling them in Paralakhemundi town. Sanu Nayak was the village headman. All the villagers showed respect to him.

At the outskirts of the village, there stood two trees: one was a mango tree and the other was a jackfruit tree. Villagers assembled under the trees and discussed problems of the village under the village head's guidance. They worshiped the two trees as living deities and offered the first produce of their fields to these. The trees shared the happiness and sorrows of the villagers.

Chaita and Gangalu were the sons of the village head. They were sent to an ashram school. After finishing school, they got married and settled in their village. One day, they came across a businessman from Andhra Pradesh. The businessman lured them into timber business. When their father came to know of this, he dissuaded them from cutting trees. He also warned them of evil omens. But, the two sons turned a deaf ear to their father's advice. They also killed wild animals indiscriminatingly.

Two years later the village experienced the ire of the Rain God. The villagers met the headman. The disari was asked to perform a five-day worship to propitiate the Rain God. But it was of no avail. The villagers were at a loss. One day the tree gods spoke to the headman in a dream of trees being felled by his two sons. . There would be no more rain unless the erring sons apologised for their acts. Again all should plant a tree for each tree felled by these two.

The head narrated the dream to his fellow villagers. The two sons were brought before the villagers. They begged forgiveness for their misdeeds.. The villagers took an oath before the tree Gods that they would plant trees.

Thereafter, the sky became overcast and it started raining.

Binod Chandra Jena

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The Village in the Lap of a Hillock

A village called Kusumpur was situated at the foot of a down hill. The villagers made a living of collecting fruits and roots from the forest; and by cultivating the fields. They had no link with the world outside. There was a school at the end of the village. A teacher was posted there. But, he remained absent most of the time.

One day, the school inspector paid a visit to the school. He found that the teacher was absent. He was also surprised that the villagers did not notice the teacher's absence. He called a meeting of villagers. The inspector asked many questions to them and made them aware of their rights and duties. He also spoke of the importance of education. He advised the villagers to learn about the various programmes of the government.

Kamala Kant Nayak, Keonjhar

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Village History

Bagguda Village

A century ago, human settlement began in Bagguda. A dense forest surrounded the settlement. Many rivers and rivulets criss-crossed the endless forest, which was home to wild animals such as tigers, bears, leopards and foxes. They lived in peace without intruding into each others' territory. The existence of large number of tigers in jungle might have made people call the village Bagguda. In course of time, villagers started taking to farming by clearing patches of the forest. This resulted in large-scale destruction of the forest. This threatened the survival of the wild animals. . As a result, they made forays into the human settlement and lifted their cattle. Villagers became careful and sought to protect themselves from the animals.

At this time, the village priest fell into a trance and told the villagers that they should start worshipping Goddess Bagdevi, otherwise the village would face danger. The villagers decided to worship Goddess Bagdevi. The worship reduced the invasion of animals. This could be another reason why this village came to be known as Bagguda.

The village is surrounded by other villages– Khaliapada on the south and Bajarapada on the north and Mandiapada is located on the eastern side. Thirty-three families belonging to various tribes such as Binjhar, Gond and Goud live in the village. People left this village to settle in other states.

The surrounding villages and their names have also significance. Kaliapada is named after a special fountain in the area that never permits water to soak into a deeper layer soil. Bayarpada village is

named after piasal trees which are found in abundance in this region. Another village is named after a grain called Ragi. To the north of the village lies a hill called Thakurbuda Donger.

People constructed their huts with palmyra leaves after clearing patches of forests. They did not know how to build their houses with mud. In course of time they learnt how to build mud houses with tiled roofs.

The village had no well. Roads were virtually non-existent. Villagers walked over the hedges of fields to go from one place to another. Gradually, they cleared the forest to build roads.

Grains like paddy, finger millets, green gram were cultivated. These largely provided livelihood to them.

They collected various types of edible roots, tubers, flowers from the forest. They stored the mahua flower and kendu fruits and ate these during the rainy season, when food was very scarce. As time passed, they learnt to prepare liquor from mahua flower.

They knew cloth-making. Later on, they purchased sari for women, clothes for men. As far as daily wages were concerned, they faced invisible unemployment. Whenever they got any opportunity to work for someone, they were invariably paid in kind. In fact, money was rarely used.

Education was limited to the learning of the alphabet, and it was imparted in a very cumbersome way. A wooden board was made for this purpose. Mud was scratched with the help of a stick to write the alphabet on the board.

The village economy depended on agriculture for six months and the remaining six months people spent on collecting different kinds of forest produce. They sold kendu leaves to meet their expenses. Their expenditure always surpassed their income and left them hard-pressed. Sometimes, erratic monsoon forced people get into debt.

Such conditions remained unchanged. In 1995, a primary education centre was set up in the village. Before this the villagers used to hire the service of a teacher at Guhalpada and sent their children to him. Each student contributed something towards the salary of the teacher. Besides, they provided him with varieties of grains such as rice, ragi, kangu, beans and chilies. Problems arose in the education centre leading to virtual closure of the school.

Towards the end of 2000, an alternative education centre was established in the village. The daytime school could not be successful as pupils had to work during the school time. As the alternative education centre followed a student-friendly time schedule it ran smoothly. Forty-five students were enrolled at the centre. Among them, it was heartening to know that a majority of them were girls and they were found to have a keen interest than the boys in education.

After the opening of the alternative education centre, watershed programmes were introduced in the village which enabled the villagers to earn more. This also checked out migration of village people. This brought about a chain of benefits. They no longer visited moneylenders. They tried to save money and with their savings purchased landed property. They started Self Help Groups. They also stored rice in a grain bank.

The villagers are now aware about the need for forming jungle protection committees. The committee makes arrangements for villagers taking turns to guard fifty hectares of forest near their village. Fines are imposed on defaulters. The money so collected was deposited in the common fund of the village. The additional duty of the committee is to raise awareness against liquor consumption. Such participatory work culture has brought them together and they feel that they actually order the affairs of the village.

They are going to start educating women soon. Village women will be encouraged to participate in this programme, and carry on the developmental work.

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Gaja Amba Village

The small village Gaja Amba is located in Kalamagadia G.P in Kaptipada block of Mayurbhanj district. It is 43 kilometres from the block headquarters and sixteen kilometres from the police station. When panchayats were reconstituted, some people of the erstwhile G.P relocated to Rama Chandrapur G.P.

The elderly villagers are of the opinion that the history of the village stretches back to ancient times. It was around 1885 AD that the village came into being, perched like a nest in the deep and wide forest.

Immigrants from Bihar and Singhbhum were the first to have arrived here. At the beginning, there were seven families in all. The family heads were Pradhan Munda, Paika Munda, Harta Munda, Lukin Banra, Kairaraya and Debara Banra. The seven families had nineteen men and ten women. . After a decade, Payasingalaya came over to the village to build his house there.

The elderly villagers tell the following story about the origin of Gaja Amba—

There was dense jungle everywhere at the beginning. It was infested with ferocious wild animals. People were scared of these. . They made sure everything was done before darkness fell. Yet, one Lukin Banra was killed by a tiger. People toiled hard for their subsistence. There was virtually no cultivable farm land. They lived on forest produces and hunting. They collected minor forest produces such as fuelwood, honey and sold these in Balasore and Bhadrak. Whatever they earned from this helped them to survive. There were

no market places nearby; they used to travel twenty-five kilometers to thirty kilometers to collect their essential provisions. In course of time, they cleared patches of forests for growing crops.

Tribal people, as they say, never lose their patience in the face of adversities. They take adversity in their stride. They pray to the village deity whenever they find themselves in trouble. They think that problems arise due to the anger of the village deity. They sacrifice animals and birds to appease her.

There were no educated persons in the village. Whenever they came across a man in suits, they felt very scared. They were exploited by them.

How the Village Got its Name

The village elders say that the village had no formal name. They learnt from their forefathers the following story how the village got its name:

There was a tender mango tree that grew luxuriantly and stood as a sentinel at the outskirts of the village. Villagers grew very attached to this young mango tree, and in order to keep it in their memory, they named their village, 'Amba Gaja', which meant 'young one'. But, for the sake of rhyming, they changed it to 'Gaja Amba'. In course of time, the young and slender mango tree spread its branches and bore fruits. Villagers gathered the ripe mangoes. The name used by their forefathers is still used and the village is known as Gaja Amba.

There were no roads connecting the village to the world outside. People used a cattle-trodden path to travel from one place to another. They walked twenty to twenty-five kilometres along this path to collect their essential provisions. But now the village is connected with a road.

There were no facilities for education in the village nor in the villages nearby. There was a lower primary school in the far-off Kaptipada. In course of time, a man, called Dasaratha, started teaching on the veranda of Sarata police station. Students also went to a newly

opened school at Kalamgadia. Some of the students, after passing lower primary school, went to a U.P School. But a majority of boys spent their time roaming around with arrows and bows as there was no school around. Now, in the village, eighteen men have received some education. Only two women, in their thirties, have received education up to standard ten.

Agragamee started a school in our village. This enabled the boys and girls of the village to pursue their studies. Manjuata Behere was the first teacher to be appointed in the school.

A village committee looked after the management of the school. The committee consisted of seven members. From among them five are men and two are women. The committee members get students enrolled in the school. As a result, all the school going children are not afraid of going to the school run by the government.

Years back, people walked three, four kilometers to reach river Sone and fetch drinking water. There were no wells and ponds in the village. They used river water for bathing, cleaning and drinking. Fifteen years ago, a pond and a borewell were dug in the village.

Villagers initially made a living by gathering fruits and hunting. They had no plots of land where they could raise crops. They collected various kinds of minor forest produce, and in exchange of these got essential items of their daily consumption. In course of time, they sowed seeds in the high land clearing jungles. The harvest enabled them to live on for one or two months. For their livelihood, they migrated to different places in search of daily wages. They cleared patches of jungle for growing crops and got the land registered in their names. As a result, villagers earned their livelihood by tilling land for six months and during the rest of the year, they survivied on forest produce.

Earlier, this area was covered with jungle. Due to the population growth, the forest got depleted very fast. No more wild animals are seen in the area. The soil found in this area is sandy. During summer

all the water bodies virtually dry up with patches of water left here and there in the deep ravines.

The tribals of this area celebrate various festivals. The important festivals are Magha festival, Here festival, Jamalama festival and Chaitra festival. The Chaitiparva is celebrated unitedly by three hamlets. All the three villages donate money. With the money, they purchase two or three goats and cocks to sacrifice before the village deity. Relatives arrive with country liquor; liquor is also brewed in every house of the village. A priest is selected from among the villagers for worshipping the deity, known as Dehury. The villagers dance accompanied to music. The Magha festival is another major festival in this area. Dance and song are organised for four, five days at a stretch. Musical instruments starting from harmonium to ethnic musical instruments are used on the occasion.

Jayasmi Murmu

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Village Dabjhar

The village Dabjhar starts at the border of Bolangir and Kalahandi district. This village is in Bangamunda block. Endless jungle criss-crossed by mountains surround the village from all sides. Geographically, the village has a vast stretch of plateau on the north, Adaki hill on the east, Gujia on the west and Chaka on the south. The village must be in existence for about 180 years, where villagers have been living for generations, Old men of the village are of the view that the village owes its name to the Dabjhar grass, which covers the land like a carpet.

Ten year's back there was no road communication to the village. A number of rivulets cut the village off from the world outside. But, now, the situation has changed for the better.

There were no facilities for receiving education in the village. The adults of the village tried to learn the alphabet. In Mahalinga panchayat of Kalahandi district, there was a primary school. The high school ran in Sindhekela in Bolangir district, which was 20 kilometres away from the village.

There was no health service worth the name in the village. Whenever they fell ill, people had to go to Sindhekela, which lay twenty kilometres away from the village. Now a days, people take medicine to get cured of diseases or to cope with various health hazards. Earlier they believed in magic and would go to a sorcerer or a priest whenever they fell ill.

The community fundsraised by village women and the overall income from goatery enabled people to access medical facilities. They

availed themselves of the monthly medical check-up. The PHC at Sindhekela is 20 kilometres away and the personnel managing the PHC are not always sincere in delivering health services.

Three months back, children suffered from skin diseases. Though the mothers of these children were instructed to use soaps and other medicines, they did not heed the advice. We prepared herbal medicines and applied it on the skin of the students, which cured the ailments.

Villagers depended on agriculture for subsistence. But they found it hard to grow enough to keep them in food for the whole year. Agragamee raised their awareness and gave them useful information. Sikshasandhan set up an alternative education centre, which has been functioning since 1997.

A primary school ran in the village. The single teacher was a habitual absentee. Students were the worst victims. The guardians never bothered about the problems they faced. The alternative education centre was of a great help as it introduced flexible timings.. The village children belonging to age group of six years now learnt to read and write at the school. Adolescents also came to the school in the evening after finishing their day's work. This resulted in a number of positive changes. The literacy rate in the village rose to fifteen percent. The centre also made the villagers of their rights and they have succeeded in making the school teacher to come to the school regularly.

Five years back, the villagers had no village fund. They flocked to village moneylenders at the time of need such as the marriage of their children. They took loans at a high rate of interest and mortgaged their property. Agragamee started a grain bank in the village. . The stock of the grain bank grew from a meagre stock to a substantial amount; sixty-seven poutis of paddy are now stored in it. As a result, the villagers have stopped going to moneylenders. In the time of need, they go to the grain bank instead; during the harvesting season, they pay back their loan of paddy.

In addition to this, the village women have formed three SHGs, each of which has got ten women as its members. One group has saved seven thousand rupees in their savings bank account. Earlier, there was no women's group in the village. Women were persuaded to save a fistful of rice daily. At the time of need, they borrow freely from their fund and face no more problems.

The villagers were given five thousand rupees to start a goatery, initially, with four goats. The income generated from goatery goes to the savings account of the villagers. The number of goats is now fourteen. These projects helped villagers to become self-reliant. Now, they dream of a bright future for their children by providing education to them.

Nandini Sahu

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Tribal Songs

Rain

The monsoons,
The deities of the vast universe
We welcome you,
the descending rains of Ashādh.
Also the inky clouds,
that float and coil like bangles.
The flowers, trees, birds and animals,
Restlessly wait for you.
Fall on the burning heat of summer
We welcome you.
The earth would feel revived
at your arrival.
The rains splash the land,
The earth would turn into
a vast expanse of green.
Happiness would spread all over
encompassing one and all.
Everything is possible
Only after your visit,
We welcome you, o, benevolent Rain,
bowing to you a thousand and one times.

Digambar Gomang, All India Radio, Jeypore, Koraput

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The Song of the Drowned Earth

River Indravati,
glides along
here it branches off
or flows there
how you made a dam over it
hey, my sahib brother?
Our little village,
which was perched on a hill
now the waters from the dam
drown it completely
no trace of it remains.
We shed tears reminiscing
about the days gone by
a dam was built in the interest of the nation.
yet, nobody bothered
to ask us even for once.
The lost village under the watery grave
had a common place
when villagers came on a procession during festivals
to gather there.
The river flowed on leisurely
gave us water to drink
the forest offered us fruits and roots
but, it is now no more.

we have settled on a barren land
starvation stares us in the face.
All the promises
Are a distant dream.
In the new settlement
There is a school
without a teacher.
And the pond nearby,
lies dry.

Dambarudhar Jani, Kalahandi

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A Sabar Folk Song

O, my darling, my darling,
I pine for you.
I long to see your round face.
Amid dense forests, encircling mountains
You, the partner of my life.
Your beaming smile unfolds
Like the petals of a kadamba flower.
The reflection of your lovely image
on a mirror,
Like wild lily on water.
You are my tube rose
you bloom forever in my heart
O, my sun-faced darling,
my moon-faced darling,
give me your love.

* * *

Festivals

The Maria Festival

Maria is a festival of the soura tribe, which center on agriculture. It falls on the full moon day of Margashira; goddess Juju Batangi is worshipped on this occasion.

Long back, soura people used to offer human sacrifice to Juju. Once a girl called Maria from the Jani family had a strange bath in turmeric-soaked water and was offered to Juju as a sacrifice. The girl waited happily for the day. The festival got its name from her.

It is no longer possible to offer human sacrifice; so in its place, buffaloes are offered to the goddess though the ritual of bath and incantation of mantra continues to be performed. The animal to be sacrificed is known as Gaj-bong. The soura people take slices of meat from the offering, dug it in their fields. They believe that it would bring them a bumper harvest.

Men and women wear new clothes on the occasion of Maria festival. After the rituals and incantation of mantras by the jani, the deity perched on a banyan tree would be brought down. People gathered there start dancing to the accompaniment of music which continues till daybreak. During the rituals, both men and women take drinks and spend the night in a state of ecstasy. Goddess Tangima is brought to Jahki, a place for the Goddess other than her abode on the tree. When the worship is over, she is offered sacrifices and a silver bracelet.

The goddess resembles an axe; hence, the name of the goddess is 'Tangi'. An axe is used to fight with wild animals. The axe symbolizes the goddess.

Ghasi Sabar, Damba Sora, Rayagada

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Rani Festival

Tribal people celebrate various festivals throughout the year. Rani festival inaugurates the festive calendar of a year. Among some tribes, people celebrate this festival in the month of Ashadh. The villagers decide the time and duration of the festival. The festival relates to agriculture, monsoons and good harvest.

On the first day people uproot seedlings from their field and worship these as part of the ritual. They would wear new dresses and cook their meals in new earthen pots. They offer food to the earth goddess and also to Dumba, the devil.

On the second day, they again worship the uprooted seedlings and plant them. This festival symbolises the tribal's love for agriculture, especially love for seedlings, which they regard as their own off-spring.

Ramdhar Jhodia, Siriguda, Rayagada

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This volume brings together folktales, songs, village histories and reminiscences of tribal people living in remote corners of Orissa. They offer us fresh insights into their lives, at the same time, enlighten us about the richness of the tribal world view.

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